

Reform Snapshot

The Council has developed five questions to guide postsecondary reform:

1. Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?
2. Are more students enrolling?
3. Are more students advancing through the system?
4. Are we preparing Kentuckians for life and work?
5. Are Kentucky's communities and economy benefiting?

These questions are posed in the Council's Action Agenda, the document that serves as the "strategic implementation plan" required by House Bill 1. They explicitly link the work of the state's postsecondary institutions to the needs of Kentucky. The five questions express the Council's commitment to expand Kentuckians' access to postsecondary education and to ensure the system improves lives and strengthens communities.

The Council established a set of key indicators to help answer these questions. Each indicator provides a specific, measurable objective for postsecondary reform, established in consultation with the institutions and other reform partners. Some indicators (such as the percentage of Kentuckians with a baccalaureate degree or higher) are broad, systemwide measures. Others are specific to individual postsecondary institutions. The Council staff regularly reports progress toward performance goals to the Council. Detailed information about each of the key indicators is provided in Appendix A, and is available to the public via the Council's key indicator website, www.cpe.state.ky.gov/KeyInd/index.asp.

In April 2004, the Council staff began work on the first systematic revision of the Council's public agenda for postsecondary education and the individual campus action plans. A more detailed description of the Council's strategic planning initiative can be found on page 32 of this report.

National Recognition for Reform

In a comprehensive assessment of postsecondary reform progress released in October 2002 by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) notes

that “the CPE’s use of the five questions to frame indicators of progress toward reform has become a model for states across the U.S.” The NCHEMS report characterizes Kentucky’s progress toward postsecondary reform as:

... nothing short of remarkable ... There is a new sense of hope, pride, and confidence. In response to the question, “Why not?” the answer today is, “This is Kentucky and the Commonwealth is leading the nation in demonstrating how sustained attention to education reform can bring about fundamental, long-term improvement in a state’s quality of life and economy.”

A 2004 report from The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education cites Kentucky as an exemplary state that puts accountability “front and center” in communications with policy makers and postsecondary providers.

Members of the Council staff have been invited to present information about progress on Kentucky’s public agenda in other states and at national conferences and symposia (National Governors’ Association, State Higher Education Executive Officers, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Education Commission of the States, and the Wingspread Group on Higher Education). The Council’s “Go Higher Kentucky” college access program has been recognized by the Southern Regional Education Board for its success, and the state was invited to help develop a regional effort to create similar campaigns in all of the SREB states. Council staff members also have been asked to consult with the states of Ohio, California, and Montana in the development of their programs to promote college-going.

More recently, a 2004 report from The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education cites Kentucky as an exemplary state that puts accountability “front and center” in communications with policy makers and postsecondary providers. Membership on the Commission includes nationally recognized higher education leaders, including Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education President Tom Layzell.

The success of Kentucky’s postsecondary reform initiative led to an invitation by the National Forum on College Level Learning for the state to pilot a national effort to gather and analyze information on college-level learning. The on-going project aims to inform leaders and policymakers about how effectively each state’s college educated residents contribute to state’s education capital, as well as how colleges and universities collectively further each state’s economic and civic objectives. The project, which began in 2001, now includes five states (Kentucky, Illinois, South Carolina, Nevada, and Oklahoma). Initial findings were included in *Measuring Up 2004: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education* published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

In 2004, Kentucky was one of eight states invited to participate in a State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)/Lumina Foundation initiative designed to improve postsecondary education knowledge resources (i.e. data sources, information streams, graphic presentations, text documents, and analytic methods) in all states. A team visited the Council offices in June to document Kentucky's approaches to using knowledge resources that address issues of student preparation and success, higher education costs and finance, and other key policy areas. Based on this research and the experience of states, SHEEO will outline recommendations and a plan of action for improving postsecondary education knowledge resources in all states.

Measuring Up 2004 provides other evidence of the state's progress. Kentucky is one of only four states in the nation that over the past decade improved in four out of five Measuring Up categories: preparation; participation, affordability, completion, and benefits. The other states are Arkansas, Tennessee, and South Dakota. California is the only state that improved in five categories.

An Overview of Progress

The following performance highlights—taken from the Council's accountability system, the NCHEMS report, *Measuring Up 2004*, census data, and other sources—provide a snapshot of Kentucky's recent progress in implementing the reforms set in motion by HB 1.

Question 1: Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?

Highlights:

- Adult education enrollment has increased 135 percent in four years.
- Kentucky had the highest increase in the nation in the percent of adults with a high school credential from 1990-2000.
- More 8th graders are scoring well on national assessments than a decade ago.
- More high school students are taking the right courses for college; since 1998, the number of dual enrollment courses taken in high school nearly tripled, and the number of AP courses almost doubled.
- Average tuition and fees at Kentucky institutions in 2003-04 were 25 percent below the national average.
- Despite receiving its lowest grade in the "affordability" category (D-) of the *Measuring Up 2004* report, Kentucky ranks as one of the most

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affordable states in the nation. No state received an “A” in this category, only one state received a “B,” two states received a “C,” 11 got a “D” and 36 received an “F.”

- The cost of public higher education in Kentucky as a percent of family income is unchanged from a decade ago. This contrasts with the national trend that shows that higher education costs are outpacing family income. The report also shows that the state’s investment in need-based financial aid has grown significantly over the past decade (from 20 percent of the federal Pell grant investment ten years ago to 40 percent in 2004).

Concerns:

- Minority and low-income students are not taking challenging courses in high school or scoring as well on standardized tests.
- Adult education enrollment represents only 12 percent of adults at lowest literacy levels.
- Too many high school graduates entering college are not adequately prepared; 30 percent score 18 or less on the ACT, compared to 26 percent nationally.
- Only 62 percent of 7th – 12th graders are taught by qualified teachers, compared to 81 percent in top-performing states (as reported in *Measuring Up 2004*).
- Compared to top performing states, middle and high school students are performing poorly on national assessments, including the National Assessment of Education Progress, Advanced Placement exams, and the ACT.
- 83 percent of GED examinees report income of less than \$10,000 a year.
- Adequate financial aid is not available for part-time students, a barrier for adults in the workforce.

Question 2: Are more students enrolling?

Highlights:

- Since 1998, total enrollment in postsecondary education increased 25 percent.
- Kentucky is one of only eight states that showed improvement in college participation over the past decade. Over the past 10 years, the chance of enrolling in college by age 19 has increased by 11 percent, in contrast to a nationwide decline of 3 percent. For the first time, the

college-going rate of 9th graders exceeds the national average, up from 34 to 38 percent over the last decade.

- Kentucky is closing the college participation gap between white students and minority ethnic groups, and between students from low- and high-income families. Over the past 10 years the percentage of young adults from minority ethnic groups enrolled in college increased from 15 percent to 32 percent of all young adult minorities. During that time the number of young adults from low-income families enrolled in college increased from 16 percent to 30 percent of all young adults from low-income families.
- The percent of GED completers enrolling in college within two years increased from 12 percent in 1998 to 20 percent in 2001.

Concerns:

- The college participation rate of both young and working-age adults is low compared to the top-performing states; minority and low-income students are much less likely to go to college than white, affluent students.
- The proportion of degree-seeking freshmen returning their second year is relatively unchanged over the last six years.
- The number of students transferring from two-year to four-year institutions was lower in 2003 than in 1998.

Question 3: Are more students advancing through the system?

Highlights:

- At the state's public universities, the systemwide six-year graduation rate rose from 36.7 percent in 1998 to 45.3 percent in 2003.
- Kentucky is among the fastest improving states on the proportion of students completing certificates and degrees relative to the number enrolled.
- The proportion of degrees conferred in 2003 to Kentucky resident African Americans was 5.8 percent, up from 4.4 percent in 1995.

Concerns:

- For every 100 9th graders, only 15 complete a degree.
- Kentucky's graduation rate remains well below the national rate: 45.3 percent of first-time, full-time college students complete a degree within six years, compared to 54.3 percent nationally.
- Kentucky ranks 47th in the nation in the percent of the adult popula-

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tion with a four-year degree or higher.

- More graduate and professional degree production is needed to spur economic development, sustain vital communities, and provide professional services to Kentucky's people.

Question 4: Are we preparing students for life and work?

Highlights:

- According to *Measuring Up 2004*, Kentucky graduates perform well on licensure and teacher certification exams and two-year college students score at or above the national average on Work Keys assessments.
- Results from the 2003 National Survey of Student Engagement show public universities have made progress on measures of undergraduate student experience, especially “enriching educational experience” and “interactions with faculty members.”

Concerns:

- *Measuring Up 2004* shows four-year college students score below the national average on assessments of student learning.
- Compared to 2001, the 2003 National Survey of Student Engagement shows a decline in the proportion of college students who vote, volunteer, and give to charity.
- Not enough Kentuckians score well on graduate entrance examinations.

Question 5: Are Kentucky's communities and economy benefiting?

Highlights:

- Federal research and development spending per capita increased 92 percent since 1996.
- The Bucks for Brains program has dedicated \$700 million to support research and academic programs at the public universities; the number of endowed chairs is up from 55 in 1997 to 170 in 2003; professorships rose from 53 to 237.
- Since 2001, nearly 128,000 employees upgraded their skills through workforce education funded by Kentucky Adult Education and its partnership with the Workforce Alliance.
- From 1990 to 2000, Kentucky's per capita income increased from 79.3 percent to 81.8 percent of the U.S. average, the 10th highest rate of increase in the nation.

Federal research and development spending per capita increased 92 percent since 1996.

Concerns:

- Kentucky currently ranks 42nd in the nation in the amount of federal research and development dollars generated.
- Kentucky's per capita income is only 81.8 percent of the national average.

